



The Death and Rebirth of Philosophy in Wittgenstein's Thought

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Abstract— This review article examines the trajectory of Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophical development as a narrative of death and rebirth, the death of traditional metaphysical philosophy and the rebirth of a therapeutic, grammatical form of inquiry. Tracing the arc from the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* to the *Philosophical Investigations*, this analysis argues that Wittgenstein's mature work does not simply reject his early positions but rather transforms the very conception of what philosophy can and ought to be. Through a critical engagement with the secondary literature, this article demonstrates that Wittgenstein's enduring significance lies in his radical reconceptualisation of philosophical problems as confusions arising from the misuse of language. The review synthesises competing interpretations from the standard two-Wittgensteins narrative to the resolute reading and the therapeutic approach, while proposing that the death/rebirth metaphor captures both the discontinuity and the underlying continuity in Wittgenstein's thought. Special attention is paid to the *Tractatus*'s self-consuming methodology, the *Investigations*'s practice of assembling reminders, and the ethical dimension that persists across both periods. The article concludes that Wittgenstein's legacy is not a set of doctrines but a philosophical practice that continues to challenge and inspire contemporary inquiry.

Keywords— Wittgenstein, philosophy of language, ordinary language philosophy, logical positivism, rule-following, private language, philosophical therapy, *Tractatus*, *Philosophical Investigations*

I. INTRODUCTION

The figure of Ludwig Wittgenstein casts a long and peculiar shadow over twentieth-century philosophy. Few thinkers have been so widely celebrated, so passionately contested, and so frequently misunderstood. His two major works, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921) and the *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), are routinely presented as representing two distinct philosophies, separated by a decisive rupture that Wittgenstein himself acknowledged. Yet the relationship between these works remains one of the most fertile and contentious territories in contemporary philosophy. The narrative of death and rebirth, while dramatic, captures something essential about Wittgenstein's intellectual journey: the death of philosophy conceived as a theoretical science aiming at metaphysical truths, and the rebirth of philosophy as an activity of

clarification, description, and therapy. This review article examines how this transformation unfolds across Wittgenstein's corpus and how the secondary literature has grappled with its implications.

The literature on Wittgenstein is vast, but several interpretive strands are particularly relevant for understanding the death/rebirth narrative. The so-called "standard interpretation," associated most prominently with Peter Hacker and the late Gordon Baker, treats the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* as representing two incompatible philosophies separated by a fundamental change in Wittgenstein's thinking [2]. On this reading, the early Wittgenstein was a truth-conditional semanticist who held that language consists of atomic propositions picturing possible states of affairs, while the later Wittgenstein abandoned this picture theory in favour of a use-based

account of meaning. The standard interpretation emphasises discontinuity, arguing that the later philosophy repudiates nearly every major thesis of the *Tractatus* [10].

A rival approach, the “resolute reading” advanced by James Conant and Cora Diamond, offers a more radical interpretation of the *Tractatus* itself [5]. According to the resolute readers, Wittgenstein never intended to advance philosophical theses in the *Tractatus*, not even the picture theory. Instead, the work is purely therapeutic: it aims to lead the reader to recognise that metaphysical statements are nonsense, and then to throw away the ladder after climbing it. On this view, the continuity between early and late Wittgenstein is stronger than the standard interpretation allows, since both periods share a therapeutic conception of philosophy's purpose [7]. The resolute reading has generated considerable controversy, with critics charging that it cannot account for the *Tractatus*'s explicit statements and logical structure [22].

Between these poles lies a spectrum of intermediate positions. Marie McGinn emphasises the ethical motivation that unifies Wittgenstein's thought, arguing that both the early and late philosophies seek to dissolve philosophical confusion in order to return us to the ordinary world where genuine value resides [17]. Severin Schroeder traces the development of Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations from the *Tractatus* through the 1930s manuscripts to the *Investigations*, demonstrating that certain key insights remained constant even as the framework changed [23]. Hans-Johann Glock situates Wittgenstein's evolution within the broader context of analytic philosophy, showing how his critiques of logical atomism and mentalism anticipated later developments in philosophy of mind and language [9].

The ethical dimension of Wittgenstein's thought has received renewed attention in recent scholarship. For decades, the logical positivists' appropriation of the *Tractatus* obscured its ethical and mystical aspects, but contemporary readers have recovered these elements and now regard them as central to understanding Wittgenstein's overall philosophical project.[4]. The famous closing proposition “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent” is not merely a limitation on meaningful language but an invitation to recognise the ineffable character of ethical and aesthetic value [34]. This ethical concern persists in the *Investigations*, albeit transformed: instead of situating value beyond the limits of language, the later Wittgenstein locates it within the concrete practices and forms of life that make language possible [3].

Methodologically, Wittgenstein's influence has been profound but diffuse. In the philosophy of language, his critique of referential theories of meaning opened the door

for speech act theory, pragmatics, and contextualist approaches [26]. In the philosophy of mind, his private language argument undermined Cartesian conceptions of inner experience and anticipated externalist and enactivist theories [25]. In epistemology, his treatment of hinge propositions in *On Certainty* has inspired a distinctive form of epistemic foundationalism that emphasises the role of ungrounded certainties in rational practice [19]. Yet Wittgenstein's legacy is also marked by resistance: many philosophers have found his anti-theoretical stance frustrating, and his refusal to construct positive theories has limited his influence in systematic metaphysics and epistemology [11].

The death/rebirth metaphor requires careful handling. On one hand, it captures the genuine novelty of the *Investigations*: the abandonment of logical atomism, the rejection of the picture theory, the turn toward ordinary language, and the therapeutic reconceptualisation of philosophy itself [13]. On the other hand, the metaphor risks obscuring what remains constant across the rupture: the conviction that philosophical problems arise from linguistic confusion, the method of critical examination rather than constructive theory, and the ethical aspiration that philosophy should leave everything as it is [24]. The challenge for the interpreter is to respect both discontinuity and continuity without reducing one to the other.

This review article proceeds as follows. Section one examines the *Tractatus* as an exercise in philosophical suicide: the systematic articulation of a view that ultimately undermines itself. Section two traces the transitional period of the 1930s, where the seeds of the later philosophy first appear. Section three analyses the *Philosophical Investigations* as the rebirth of philosophy as grammatical investigation and therapy. Section four addresses the persistent ethical dimension across both periods. Section five considers competing interpretations and unresolved debates. The conclusion reflects on Wittgenstein's legacy for contemporary philosophy and the enduring power of the death/rebirth narrative.

The *Tractatus* and the Death of Metaphysical Philosophy

The *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* presents itself as a work of astonishing ambition and peculiar form. Numbered propositions progress through ontology, semantics, logic, and epistemology before culminating in brief remarks on ethics, aesthetics, and the mystical. Yet the work's most striking feature is its self-proclaimed status as nonsense. Proposition 6.54 announces that anyone who has understood the author must recognise the propositions as nonsensical, using them as ladders to be thrown away after climbing [34]. This self-consuming character has generated

endless interpretive controversy, but it also contains the seed of the death/rebirth narrative: the *Tractatus* enacts the death of traditional philosophy by demonstrating that its propositions cannot satisfy their own standards of meaningfulness.

The *Tractatus*'s core doctrines are well-known. The world is the totality of facts, not of things. Facts are the existence of states of affairs, which are combinations of objects. Language consists of propositions that are pictures of possible states of affairs, sharing a logical form with them. Meaningful propositions are those that can be verified against reality; tautologies and contradictions are sense-bearing but not truth-bearing. The limits of language are the limits of thought, and what lies beyond the ethical, the aesthetic, the mystical cannot be said but only shown [34]. On the standard reading, these doctrines constitute a philosophical system, albeit one that undermines itself from within.

Yet the *Tractatus* is not merely a failed system; it is a deliberate performance of philosophical self-destruction. Wittgenstein's method of showing rather than saying, his insistence that philosophical propositions are nonsensical, and his final injunction to silence all point toward a conception of philosophy as activity rather than theory [1]. The logical positivists famously misread the *Tractatus* as a foundational work for their verificationist program, but Wittgenstein himself rejected this interpretation. In his 1929 lecture "Ethics and the Limits of Language," he explicitly distinguished his view of ethics as transcendent from the positivists' reduction of value statements to expressions of emotion [30]. The positivists wanted to build a new, scientific philosophy on the ruins of metaphysics; Wittgenstein wanted to abandon philosophy altogether, at least as traditionally conceived.

The death of metaphysics in the *Tractatus* is thus a death by logical suicide. Traditional philosophical propositions about the nature of reality, the self, freedom, God, and the good are shown to be nonsensical because they attempt to say what cannot be said. But the *Tractatus*'s own propositions fall into the same category: they too attempt to say what can only be shown. The only consistent response is to recognise the *Tractatus* as a ladder that must be thrown away, leaving behind not a doctrine but a practice. This is the death of philosophy as a theoretical discipline aiming at substantive truths about the world, reality, or the transcendent [8].

The ethical implications of this position are profound. If nothing of value can be said, then ethical discourse is impossible. Yet the ethical remains, showing itself in the attitude of the philosopher who remains silent. Wittgenstein's famous remark to Friedrich von Hayek that the *Tractatus* consists of two parts: what is written and what

is not written, with the unwritten part being the important one, indicates that the work's significance lies precisely in what it does not say [18]. The death of metaphysical ethics is the condition for the rebirth of an ineffable ethics of silence and wonder. This paradoxical position is neither coherent nor incoherent; it is a gesture beyond the limits of sense, a pointing toward what cannot be captured in propositions.

Recent scholarship has complicated this picture by attending to the *Tractatus*'s manuscript sources and the intellectual context of early twentieth-century Vienna. Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin's *Wittgenstein's Vienna* argued that the *Tractatus* is best understood as a response to the moral and cultural crises of Viennese modernism, sharing with Karl Kraus, Adolf Loos, and Arnold Schoenberg a commitment to ethical rigour expressed through formal purification [12]. Ray Monk's intellectual biography deepened this interpretation by tracing Wittgenstein's engagement with Schopenhauer, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky, showing how ethical and religious concerns animated the logical work from the beginning [18]. On this reading, the death of metaphysics is not a purely logical move but an ethical and existential one: the rejection of false philosophical consolation in favour of authentic silence.

The *Tractatus* thus occupies an ambiguous position in the death/rebirth narrative. It is simultaneously the last great work of metaphysical philosophy and the first great work of anti-metaphysical therapy. It kills philosophy by showing that its traditional questions are unaskable, yet it leaves open the possibility of a different kind of philosophy, one that shows rather than says, that clarifies rather than constructs, that remains silent where others speak nonsense. The death is real, but it also holds the promise of rebirth. What remains unclear is whether that rebirth will look more like the positivists' scientific philosophy or Wittgenstein's own later practice of assembling reminders.

The Transitional Period: The Slow Birth of a New Conception

The decade between the completion of the *Tractatus* in 1918 and Wittgenstein's return to Cambridge in 1929 is often treated as a gap, a period of silence and withdrawal. But the transitional writings of the early 1930s, the *Philosophical Remarks*, the *Philosophical Grammar* and *The Blue and Brown Books*, reveal a thinker in ferment, gradually abandoning the *Tractatus*'s framework while retaining its therapeutic impulse [33]. The rebirth of philosophy does not occur overnight; it is a slow, painful process of emergence, marked by false starts, self-criticisms, and repeated reformulations.

Wittgenstein's return to philosophy was prompted by conversations with the mathematician L. E. J. Brouwer,

whose intuitionist critique of classical logic challenged the *Tractatus's* assumption that logic is a self-contained, timeless structure [27]. Brouwer argued that mathematics is a creative activity of the human mind, not a description of a pre-existing realm of logical facts. This resonated with Wittgenstein's growing dissatisfaction with the *Tractatus's* static, ahistorical conception of language. If language is a human activity embedded in social practices, then meaning cannot be reduced to truth-conditions or logical form [33]. The picture theory, with its assumption of a single, fixed logical structure underlying all meaningful language, began to seem like a metaphysical prejudice rather than a discovery.

The *Philosophical Remarks* (1930) marks the first explicit break. Wittgenstein now distinguishes between "primary" and "secondary" language, allowing for different kinds of meaning in different contexts. He abandons the strict isomorphism between propositions and states of affairs, embracing a more flexible conception of grammar. Yet the *Remarks* still retains much of the *Tractatus's* apparatus: the concern with the limits of language, the distinction between saying and showing, and the aspiration to a final analysis. The transition is incomplete; Wittgenstein is in the grip of a picture he has not yet fully escaped [33].

By the *Philosophical Grammar* (1932–34), the shift is more pronounced. Wittgenstein now treats language as a family of language-games, each with its own rules and criteria of sense. The idea of a single logical form underlying all language is abandoned in favour of a pluralistic conception of meaning as use. The method of logical analysis is replaced by the method of grammatical investigation: the description of the rules that govern our actual linguistic practices [31]. The philosopher's task is not to explain but to describe, not to construct theories but to assemble reminders. The *Grammar* is an uneasy hybrid, oscillating between *Tractatus*-style logical atomism and the later practice of assembling examples, but the direction of travel is clear.

The *Blue and Brown Books* (1933–35), dictated as lecture notes to his students, represent the first mature expression of Wittgenstein's later method. Here we find the full arsenal of the *Investigations*: language-games, forms of life, family resemblances, the critique of private language, the attack on the Augustinian picture of language, and the conception of philosophy as therapy. The *Blue Book* opens with a diagnosis of the philosopher's craving for generality, tracing it to our fascination with the method of science and our neglect of the particular case [28]. Wittgenstein's alternative is a practice of "assembling reminders" that return words from their metaphysical to their everyday use. The *Brown Book* develops this method through extended examples,

showing how philosophical problems dissolve when we attend to the concrete circumstances of language use.

The transitional period is essential to understanding the death/rebirth narrative because it reveals that Wittgenstein's later philosophy is not a sudden conversion but a gradual working out of tensions internal to the *Tractatus*. The later Wittgenstein does not simply reject the earlier; he reinterprets it, discovering in its therapeutic impulse a direction that its doctrinal form obscured. In the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein treats many philosophical propositions as meaningless. In *Philosophical Investigations*, he instead argues that philosophy should describe how language is used in everyday life through different language-games rather than develop theories. This marks a shift from metaphysical speculation to clarifying language [32].

The Philosophical Investigations: Rebirth as Grammatical Therapy

The *Philosophical Investigations* is Wittgenstein's masterwork and the fullest expression of his mature philosophy. Published posthumously in 1953, it consists of two parts: a series of numbered remarks arranged in a deliberate but non-linear order, and a shorter second part added by the editors from Wittgenstein's later manuscripts. The work's form enacts its content: it is not a treatise advancing a theory but a collection of "sketches of landscapes" made over a long journey, inviting the reader to see connections rather than to master a system [32]. The rebirth of philosophy announced in the *Investigations* is a rebirth as practice rather than doctrine, as therapy rather than science, as description rather than explanation.

The *Investigations* opens with a quotation from Augustine's *Confessions*, presenting a picture of language as a naming process in which words are labels attached to objects. Wittgenstein's critique of this picture occupies the first 150 remarks, gradually revealing its inadequacies and replacing it with the concept of language-games. A language game is a simple, primitive language complete in itself, embedded in a form of life. The meaning of a word is its use in the language-game; there is no further essence to be discovered behind the use [32]. This is not a theory of meaning but a methodological recommendation: look at how words are actually used rather than speculating about what they must mean.

The concept of family resemblances dissolves the traditional philosophical demand for necessary and sufficient conditions. Words like "game" do not have a single essence shared by all games; instead, they are related by overlapping similarities like the fibres in a rope. Philosophical problems arise when we assume that all things called by the same name must share a common

essence, leading us to search for an invisible entity that explains their unity [32]. Wittgenstein's response is to reject the question: there is no such essence, only the complicated network of similarities that holds the concept together. This anti-essentialist stance has profound implications for metaphysics, epistemology, and the philosophy of mind.

The rule-following considerations are among the *most influential and controversial sections of the Investigations*. Wittgenstein asks what it means to follow a rule, arguing that no rule can determine its own application. Any interpretation of a rule can be given in terms that themselves require interpretation, leading to an infinite regress. The regress is stopped not by a further rule but by practice: following a rule is a custom, a use, an institution [32]. This argument has been taken to undermine the idea of a private, inner mental act of meaning or understanding, showing that meaning is essentially social and normative. Saul Kripke's influential reading presented Wittgenstein as a sceptic about rule-following, but many commentators argue that Wittgenstein's point is not sceptical but therapeutic: the problem of rule-following arises only when we adopt a mistaken picture of mental processes [14].

The private language argument is perhaps the most famous and most contested section of the *Investigations*. Wittgenstein argues that a language that could in principle be understood by only a single speaker, referring to private sensations, is impossible. The argument turns on the criteria of correctness: if sensations are private, there can be no distinction between seeming to follow a rule and actually following it, so the very notion of correctness collapses [32]. This is not a behaviourist denial of the inner life but a demonstration that the inner presupposes the outer: the concept of a private sensation is parasitic on the public language-game in which sensations are expressed and recognised. The private language argument has been deployed against Cartesian dualism, representational theories of mind, and various forms of methodological solipsism [25].

Throughout the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein practices the therapeutic method he preaches. He does not refute philosophical positions by argument but dissolves them by showing how they arise from linguistic confusion. The famous "fly-bottle" metaphor captures the aim: to show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle, to free the philosopher from the linguistic traps that generate pseudo-problems [32]. Philosophy leaves everything as it is; it does not discover new facts or construct new theories but clarifies the grammar of our existing concepts. This is the rebirth of philosophy as a descriptive, therapeutic, anti-theoretical activity.

Critics have objected that this conception of philosophy is self-undermining. If philosophy cannot advance theses, then the claim that philosophy cannot advance theses is itself a thesis. Wittgenstein acknowledges this difficulty in his remark that his method is to show the nonsensical nature of philosophical propositions, including his own [32]. The *Investigations* thus inherit the *Tractatus*'s self-consuming character, though in a different form. Where the *Tractatus* built a ladder to be thrown away, the *Investigations* offers a collection of reminders that lose their point once the philosophical confusion they address has been dissolved. The latter philosophy is no less paradoxical than the former; it is merely paradoxical in a different way.

The Persistent Ethical Dimension

One of the most significant developments in recent Wittgenstein scholarship has been the recovery of the ethical dimension of his thought. For decades, the dominance of the standard interpretation and the influence of logical positivism led readers to treat Wittgenstein's ethical remarks as marginal or inessential. But the publication of his *Notebooks, 1914–1916*, the *Lecture on Ethics*, and the *Culture and Value* collection has made clear that ethical concerns are central to both the early and late periods [29]. The death/rebirth narrative is not merely about philosophy's method but about its purpose: philosophy is in the service of the good life; the clarification of our concepts is in the service of our liberation from confusion.

In the *Tractatus* period, ethics belongs to the realm of the ineffable. Propositions about value are nonsensical because they attempt to say what cannot be said. Yet the ethical shows itself in the attitude of the philosopher who recognises the limits of language and remains silent. Wittgenstein's 1929 "Lecture on Ethics" makes this explicit: ethics is an attempt to say something about the absolute value of things, but such an attempt inevitably runs up against the limits of language and produces nonsense [30]. The value of this nonsense lies in its capacity to gesture toward the transcendent, to give expression to the sense of wonder at the existence of the world. This is not a theory of ethics but a practice of ethical transformation through philosophical clarification.

The later Wittgenstein does not abandon the ethical aspiration but transforms its expression. Instead of locating value beyond the limits of language, he locates it within the concrete practices and forms of life that make language possible. The *Investigations*' famous remark that "the human body is the best picture of the human soul" indicates that ethical significance is to be found in embodied, social practices, not in an ineffable transcendent realm [32]. The concept of a form of life, the shared practices, reactions, and

attitudes that make language possible, carries ethical weight: to understand a form of life is to understand a way of being human, with its own goods, its own values, its own possibilities for fulfilment and distortion.

Stanley Cavell has been the most influential interpreter of Wittgenstein's ethical significance. For Cavell, Wittgenstein's philosophy is a response to the problem of scepticism, not as an epistemological puzzle but as a human predicament: the fear that we are fundamentally cut off from others, from the world, from ourselves [3]. Wittgenstein's response is not to refute scepticism but to show that the sceptic's demand for certainty misunderstands the grammar of our concepts. In so doing, he opens the possibility of a recovery of our ordinary relations with others, one that is simultaneously epistemological, ethical, and existential. Cavell's reading emphasises the *Investigations*' ethical depth: the practice of philosophy as acknowledgement rather than knowledge, as responsiveness to the other rather than mastery of the object.

More recent work has developed these themes by situating Wittgenstein within the virtue ethics tradition. On this reading, Wittgenstein's emphasis on practices, forms of life, and the training of perception aligns with Aristotelian conceptions of moral development as the cultivation of practical wisdom [21]. The philosopher's task of assembling reminders, of bringing words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use, is a form of moral education: it trains us to see clearly, to respond appropriately, to avoid the distortions that arise from philosophical confusion. Wittgenstein's anti-theoretical stance is not an evasion of ethics but a recognition that ethical understanding is not a matter of mastering principles but of developing capacities of perception and response.

The ethical dimension of Wittgenstein's thought remains controversial. Some critics charge that his insistence on the ineffability of value leaves no room for rational criticism of ethical practices, leading to a conservative quietism that accepts whatever form of life one happens to inhabit [15]. Others argue that the later Wittgenstein's emphasis on description precludes any normative evaluation of language-games, making it impossible to criticise ethically problematic practices. Wittgensteinians respond that description is not endorsement; to describe a language-game is not to justify it but to make its rules explicit, and such explicitness can be the first step toward critique [6]. The debate continues, but it is clear that any adequate interpretation of Wittgenstein must engage with the ethical dimension that animates his work from beginning to end.

Competing Interpretations and Unresolved Debates

The secondary literature on Wittgenstein is marked by deep and persistent interpretive divisions. The standard

interpretation, associated with the so-called "New Wittgenstein" of the resolute reading, and various intermediate positions continue to vie for dominance. These debates are not merely exegetical; they have profound implications for how we understand Wittgenstein's significance for contemporary philosophy and for the death/rebirth narrative itself.

The standard interpretation, defended most systematically by Peter Hacker, treats the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* as representing two incompatible philosophies. On this view, the early Wittgenstein held a truth-conditional theory of meaning, a logical atomist ontology, and a conception of philosophy as the logical clarification of thoughts. The later Wittgenstein rejected all of these in favour of a use-based theory of meaning, an anti-essentialist ontology, and a conception of philosophy as grammatical investigation [10]. The standard interpretation emphasises discontinuity: the later philosophy is a wholesale rejection of the earlier. This reading has the virtue of making clear sense of the *Investigations*' explicit criticisms of the *Tractatus*, but it has been challenged for failing to account for the continuities in Wittgenstein's thought and for reading the *Tractatus* too doctrinally.

The resolute reading, advanced by James Conant, Cora Diamond, and others, offers a radical alternative. According to the resolute readers, the *Tractatus* does not contain any doctrines at all, not even the picture theory. The work is entirely therapeutic: it aims to lead the reader to recognise that any attempt to say what cannot be said is nonsense, and then to throw away the ladder. On this reading, the *Tractatus* is much closer to the *Investigations* than the standard interpretation allows, since both works share a purely therapeutic conception of philosophy [5]. The resolute reading has been influential but controversial. Critics charge that it cannot account for the *Tractatus*'s explicit statements about objects, states of affairs, and logical form; that it makes the work internally incoherent; and that it fails to explain the differences between the early and later works [22].

The therapeutic interpretation, associated with readings of the *Investigations* by Marie McGinn and others, focuses on Wittgenstein's method rather than his doctrines. On this view, Wittgenstein's aim is not to advance theories about meaning, mind, or knowledge but to dissolve philosophical problems by showing how they arise from linguistic confusion [17]. The therapeutic reading emphasises continuity across the corpus while acknowledging that the method changes from logical analysis to grammatical investigation. This reading has the advantage of taking Wittgenstein's anti-theoretical claims seriously, but it faces the challenge of explaining how the *Investigations* can

avoid self-refutation and how it can have substantive philosophical implications.

Other interpretive debates concern specific topics. The private language argument continues to generate controversy: some read it as a refutation of Cartesian dualism, others as a critique of representational theories of meaning, still others as a demonstration of the social character of normativity [25]. The rule-following considerations have been interpreted as sceptical, anti-sceptical, therapeutic, and transcendental [14]. The concept of a form of life has been read in anthropological, biological, linguistic, and existential terms. These debates show no signs of resolution, and perhaps none is needed: Wittgenstein himself insisted that his method was not to produce a definitive interpretation but to show the way out of the fly-bottle [32].

CONCLUSION

The death and rebirth of philosophy in Wittgenstein's thought is not merely a biographical narrative but a philosophical drama of enduring significance. The *Tractatus* enacts the death of traditional metaphysics by demonstrating that its propositions cannot satisfy their own standards of meaningfulness. The *Investigations* enacts the rebirth of philosophy as grammatical therapy, a practice of assembling reminders that returns words from their metaphysical to their everyday use. Between these poles lies a decade of transition, during which Wittgenstein gradually abandoned the *Tractatus*'s doctrinal framework while retaining and developing its therapeutic impulse. The death/rebirth metaphor captures both the genuine novelty of the later philosophy and the underlying continuity of ethical and therapeutic concern.

Wittgenstein's legacy for contemporary philosophy is complex and contested. He has been claimed by ordinary language philosophers, post-analytic thinkers, anti-theorists, and practitioners of "therapeutic" philosophy in various traditions. His influence is visible in philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, epistemology, ethics, and the methodology of philosophy itself. Yet Wittgenstein also remains a marginal figure in much mainstream analytic philosophy, dismissed as a quietist or an obscurantist by those who prize systematic theory and positive doctrine. This marginalisation may be inevitable: a philosopher who insists that philosophy leaves everything as it is, who advances no theses, who builds no system, will always struggle for acceptance in a discipline that rewards system-builders and thesis-advancers.

The death/rebirth narrative illuminates why Wittgenstein's thought remains vital despite or perhaps because of its resistance to systematisation. The *Tractatus* shows us the

temptation of metaphysics: the desire to speak the unspeakable, to capture the world in a net of propositions, to find a final ground for meaning and value. The *Investigations* show us the therapy: the patient works on disentangling confusions, assembling reminders, and returning words to their ordinary uses. Wittgenstein's philosophy lives in the tension between these poles, a tension that is not a defect to be resolved but a resource to be cultivated. To read Wittgenstein is to be drawn into this tension, to experience the death of one's own philosophical pretensions and the rebirth of a more modest, more honest, more human practice of inquiry.

The ethical significance of this practice cannot be overstated. Wittgenstein's philosophy is not an academic exercise but a spiritual discipline, a way of seeing clearly, a liberation from the illusions that entangle us. The death of metaphysics is not the end of philosophy but the beginning of wisdom: the recognition that the deepest questions are not to be answered but to be dissolved, that the craving for theory is a symptom of confusion, that the good life is found not in philosophical systems but in the ordinary practices from which philosophy estranges us. Wittgenstein shows us the way out of the fly-bottle. Whether we follow him is up to us.

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